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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

28 December 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR (Draft)

SUBJECT: The War in Vietnam

1. To ask how the war is going in Vietnam invites another question -- which aspect? In analyzing the prospects of war there are at least three or four aspects of this complicated struggle to be considered. There is the war of maneuver between the NVA/VC main forces and the US and Allied forces. This aspect has captured most of the headlines. Simultaneously, however, there is the war against the pervasive political and military infrastructure of the Viet Cong. There is also the air war over North Vietnam, and the further question of its relationship to the conflict in South Vietnam. Finally, there are all the political aspects of the war which are closely related to the first two.



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2. The War of Manuever. During 1966 certain trends, which were already apparent in late 1965 were confirmed. The capability of the Communist main force to conduct offensive military operations was blunted and, beyond this, the US and Allied forces gradually gained the battlefield initiative. Communist main force units were mauled time and again by the increasingly effective "search and destroy" tactics of the US command. Communist plans for^a major initiative have been repeatedly spoiled by a combination of good field intelligence and quick response capabilities. Communist forces suffered heavy losses from the combined fire power of US artillery and tactical air support.

3. Though defeated in a series of engagements, the NVA/VC main forces remain intact. During 1966, total strength increased from about 75,000 to 110,000, largely because of the heavy input of men from the North. There is no reason to doubt that this can be repeated if Hanoi chooses. As far as materiel is concerned, capabilities for transporting supplies to the main forces have at least been adequate and probably well above requirements.*

* At annex in a detailed review of problems connected with manpower requirements, losses, infiltration, etc.

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4. Thus, though the US and its Allies have scored significant victories it may be more nearly the "end of the beginning" than the beginning of the end in Vietnam. The North Vietnamese offensive had to be contained. But in the near term a purely military victory does not seem possible.

Communist Military Tactics in the Next Phase

5. The Communists seem to have recognized this also. There is considerable evidence that they have been reappraising their own strategy and tactics. In general they seem to be adjusting their strategy with a view to sustaining a long war. Their objectives in the coming phase will probably be to reduce their own losses and increase the enemy's, to concentrate on smashing the US/GVN pacification program, to raise the cost of the bombing program, and, in general, to create an impression that real progress, let alone victory, is impossible for the US. Hanoi appears to believe that American will, in the light of its reading of the American body politic, will not prove equal to protracted and costly struggle.

6. The Role of the Main Forces. During the phase which the struggle is now entering, the Communists will almost certainly

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attempt to keep major elements of their main force, including the NVA elements, in the field in order to protect base areas, enlarge them if possible, and to conduct operations designed to force the US and ARVN to maintain large forces dispersed and in action against this threat. Large-scale attacks will almost certainly be launched whenever conditions appear to augur success, and especially if such an attack held some promise of having an important political effect on the US. Sustained large-unit operations, however, seem likely to continue to diminish as the Communists seek to cut the rate of attrition on the main forces. This could mean that it will be more difficult for US forces to strike large enemy concentrations with "search and destroy" operations.

7. In order to accomplish these various objectives, it is not necessary for the main forces to expand greatly. It is thus possible that Hanoi plans to slow down the expansion of main force units, especially if there is to be greater emphasis on guerrilla tactics. This could result in a decline in the infiltration of the regular North Vietnamese (NVA) units of regimental or divisional size, which would necessarily constitute the bulk of further main force expansion. It is too soon to tell if infiltration has

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already slowed in the latter part of 1966. In any event, North Vietnam will almost certainly have to send sizeable groups of replacement personnel into the South in order to maintain existing NVA main force strength.

8. The Role of the Guerrillas The next year is likely to witness an increased emphasis on the guerrilla war. This war, of course, never ceased, though it was conducted at a somewhat lower level this past year. Communist strategists apparently now believe that guerrilla operations offer a better chance of coping with US military operations. The missions of the guerrilla forces will probably include: (a) harassment of US and ARVN bases and LOC's, in order to pin down these forces in defensive operations (b) terrorist-sabotage operations in GVN-held areas (c) disruption of the pacification program by attacks on security forces assigned to RD, or RD cadres, and on pacified Hamlets. To achieve these goals, some VC main force units may be diverted to guerrilla operations, and the VC may make even more intensive efforts to motivate the population under their control.

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9. Communist guerrilla bands will almost certainly attempt further "spectaculars" such as the mortaring of major airfields and US supply depots, operations which involve relatively little risk, commit few assets and, if successful, achieve major political and propaganda effects.

10. The "Criminal" War. In forthcoming months the Communists will certainly continue and will probably step up not only guerrilla activity, but also what has been termed the "criminal" war of ~~murder~~ assassination and terrorism. Such activity of course, has never abated in the provinces. It has always been one of the Communists' principal means of attacking the local roots of central authority and of cowing the rural population. The recent assassination of Constituent Assembly member Tran Van Van and attempted murder of Dr. Pham Quang Dan suggests that the Communists may be embarking on an intensified campaign of urban terrorism. The initiation of such a campaign under present circumstances would actually be more a sign of Communist weakness than Communist strength (ideally, urban assets would be saved for the final push to topple a government softened by military defeat). The Communists may feel, however, that politically and psychologically they must compensate for

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battlefield reverses and, further, that by carefully selecting their targets, they can exacerbate regional tensions within the Vietnamese body politic and fan already existing suspicion and hostility among contending non-Communist politicians and factions.

11. A VC effort to press the guerrilla war will pose a serious challenge for the allied forces, especially since the strength of the guerrillas may have been underestimated in the past. For some years it has been estimated that there were about 100,000-120,000 "guerrillas" but there is now documentary evidence which strongly suggests that at the beginning of 1965, guerrilla (or more precisely "irregular") strength was about 200,000, and that the goal for the end of 1965 was 250,000-300,000.* (Even allowing for the overstatements of zealous local commanders, evidence from various captured documents suggest that the US and the ARVN face a much larger VC infrastructure than previously believed.

*Irregulars are divided into full-time guerrillas, part-time militia and secret guerrillas who operate clandestinely.

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Communist Problems and Prospects

12. Manpower. An important consequence of the US success against the main forces is that the heavy losses impose a continuing burden on the VC recruiting and training apparatus. Total losses for 1966 will probably amount to 120,000 and of these 35,000-40,000 were ~~main~~ main forces. The total number of North Vietnamese infiltrated will probably be at least 75,000 for the year. If the main forces are to continue growing, the VC will have to assume the burden of providing some fillers for the main forces while maintaining guerrilla strengths. The VC are probably capable of meeting 1967 requirements, even though this will probably demand close to a maximum effort (i.e., recruiting 7,000-10,000 a month). The quality of the forces may decline, however. *

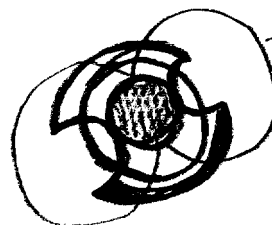
13. For example, there is some evidence that the guerrilla strength reached its peak in 1966, and in doing so exacerbated manpower problems. A staff officer of the VC 5th division, for example, stated his division was having difficulties in keeping

* See Annex for detailed discussion.



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up to strength because of lack of adequate replacements. The division was using North Vietnamese as replacements, though one would normally expect upgraded guerrillas to be more than adequate as replacements for the VC main forces. A recently captured document also suggests that manpower requirements are generating friction between guerrilla and main force units. Some hard-pressed guerrilla commanders were apparently using subterfuge to prevent guerrillas from being assigned to main force units.

14. Morale. In the next stage of the protracted war, morale is probably also a critical factor. We know that in general Viet Cong morale is less good than a year ago. The reasons include the defeats and harassments resulting from superior US firepower and mobility and good tactical intelligence; some war weariness accentuated by the diminishing prospects of any foreseeable end to the war; the manpower pinch which has forced the VC to send recruits to main force units from their native Delta habitat into the inhospitable and disease infested highlands; food and medicine shortages, etc. None of these manpower or morale problems are likely to be significantly alleviated, in a protracted war, assuming US-ARVN and Korean forces maintain pressures on VC base areas and main force units.

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15. There is bound to^{be} some loss of momentum with all its incalculable psychological impact on the officers and cadres who were led to believe that victory was not far off. And perhaps more important there may be a psychological impact on the people. It can be fatal to a guerrilla movement or a revolutionary war if the people decide that the rebels may not win after all. But, as already noted the Communist Main Forces no longer have the capability of gaining the kind of major tactical successes which would sustain their momentum.

16. In sum, the military situation is likely to develop somewhat differently than last year. The focus of the Communist effort is likely to be more on the small unit action, terrorism, sabotage and those tactics which pose the most difficult challenge to the US and to the ARVN forces. As far as capabilities and will are concerned, the Communists are encountering growing problems, but none of these appear to be critical. Thus, from the purely military standpoint there are good reasons to believe that the Communists will persevere.

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The Political Struggle

17. The political aspects of the war may now loom somewhat more importantly to the Communists as the military situation assumes more and more the character of a protracted and costly struggle. The Communist effort, of course, still depends to a great extent on the dedication and commitment of its cadres and their organizational and military skills. But these would be of no avail without the active or enforced support of large proportions of the population. Denied this support, the VC would be highly vulnerable, and probably could be driven off into the hills to starve or slowly deteriorate in strength and morale.

18. The Communists lost ground in 1966 in terms of what they can offer the people and are likely to lose even more ground in 1967. The development of a degree of stability in Saigon, the holding of elections, and the movement toward political institution began to provide the first credible alternative since Diem for political allegiance. At the level of more particular and immediate concern to the villagers, there was no decisive shift, but the strains on the VC apparatus and the pressure of US/ARVN military, pacification, civic action, and economic and construction programs

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were beginning to tell in particular areas, if not generally throughout South Vietnam. The VC have been driven increasingly to treat the population more harshly. Increased taxation, forced recruitment, and less selective acts of terrorism have hurt their image of defenders of the people. And association with the VC seems increasingly the wrong path to what the villages want most of all -- peace and security.

19. The VC ability to defend villages against US/ARVN attacks has declined, and it has become ~~increasingly certain~~ that the presence of VC forces in a village will bring down a rain of bombs and gunfire. In contrast, in government controlled areas schools are being built, medical assistance activity is available, economic activity is possible, there is a degree of immunity from bombings and battles, and the sheer weight of the resources available -- trucks, earthmovers, airplanes -- suggests that this may be the winning side. There are, of course, many shortcomings with the government side, including the pervasive threat of terrorism against those who go over or take active roles, but the trend has been in that direction over the past years. Whole villages have moved to government areas, others have been "pacified," and recruits have been found among the people to take an active role in all the various phases of revolutionary development and pacification.

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20. Pacification. The Communists, of course, recognize the critical importance of defeating the pacification program. They are likely to make a concerted effort over the next year to roll back the program just as they rolled up Diem's strategic hamlets in 1962 when they began to threaten the VC grip on some parts of the countryside. The pacification program depends on many factors, not the least of which is the steady commitment of the Saigon government. But in the near term, the key factor probably is going to be adequate security. And this rests to a considerable degree on the ARVN and the Regional and Popular force troops.

21. The Role of ARVN The ARVN today is not in good shape. In general its morale is poor, its training has suffered, its combat capabilities are limited. Only 3-4 of its 10-11 divisions are considered capable of reasonable performance in combat. And this is primarily because of the wide diversity in the qualities of division level leadership. On the record, ARVN is in no better shape now to assume a leading role in pacification than it was between 1958-1965.

22. Nevertheless, ARVN is not necessarily doomed to failure in its newest role as a security force, because of its past performance. A saving element in the present situation is the presence

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of US and ROK troops to hold the ~~right~~ keep the large main force units off the ARVN's back and in general gain some time for the ARVN to begin retraining for its new mission. No one can say at this time whether ARVN will develop a sense of mission, take the necessary measures to improve morale and begin to perform effectively in the revolutionary development security role and in sweep and clear operations. It depends largely on whether Saigon maintains its interest and pressure and whether the local commanders respond.

24. Vietnamese Political Developments.* If the outlook for the ARVN is fairly gloomy, the outlook for continued stability in the politics of South Vietnam seems ~~more~~ brighter. To be sure, fundamental problems remain and no assurance can be given that some incident might not provoke a major crisis. Over a period of 18 months the Ky regime, however, has survived various crises, which would have brought down earlier regimes. A first step has been taken ~~increasing~~ some national institutions. The US presence has helped greatly, and, despite the danger of incipient anti-Americanism, will probably continue to be a force for stability.

* A review of probable developments in Vietnamese politics is contained in NIE 53-66, 15 December 1966

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25. If, as seems likely SVN does make more progress, passing through national elections during 1967 and forming a new government, then this cannot help but have an impact on Hanoi. Any improvement in the chances for orderly political evolution in South Vietnam is discouraging to Hanoi, particularly at a time when the opportunity for military victory has been checked. Hanoi would be even more impressed and discouraged if Saigon also seemed to show progress in engaging the loyal ties of the people.

26. Prospects. The outlook in the political struggle is quite mixed. Progress in pacification and winning over the population is likely to come slowly and painfully. The Communist are going to wage the political battle ~~just~~ as vigorously as the military contest. They will almost certainly allow one and probably two years to determine the success of their own strategy. But if the pacification program moves forward steadily, even if slowly, and Saigon continues to gain in stability, then the impact on Hanoi is likely to be far greater than any statistical measures of progress might suggest.

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FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Bombing of NVN

27. If the Vietnamese Communists have in fact accepted the prospects of a long bitter struggle, then it is likely that Hanoi will take additional steps to make the US air attacks on the North increasingly costly and difficult. Hanoi, with Soviet and Chinese assistance, has built up its air defense step by step: conventional AAA, SAMs, MIGs, then more advanced MIGs, air to air missiles, improved radars, integrated warnings systems with China. And most recently, the acquisition of more MIGs, dispersal to more airfields, and use of North Korean pilots, perhaps eventually in combat.



28. As for the future, the North Vietnamese almost certainly expect further US escalation of the bombing. Thus, they almost certainly will continue with their own countermeasures. Though there would be risks involved, we cannot exclude that to check the US escalation, the Vietnamese will begin to use communist "volunteers" in combat, the North Koreans being the first test of US reactions. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese probably do not want a confrontation

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over the bombing, mainly because the bombing has been at levels which are probably considered to be tolerable, when compared to the imponderable consequences of a vastly increased air war.


29. As to the actual effectiveness of the bombing, it certainly has increased the difficulties and costs of the movement into the South. But as a coercive measure it has had no discernable effect on Hanoi's policy.  And in our view it is not likely to have the desired effect, as long as the program operates within present limits. 

30. The bombing of North Vietnam, however, has come to be as much a political as a military issue. On the one hand, it draws more criticism than any other aspect of the US involvement in Vietnam. At the same time, the Communist diplomatic and propaganda campaign to force the US to abandon the air bombardment has turned it into a symbol of US will to persist until a satisfactory peace is achieved.

31.  Negotiations and Political Settlement. The option of trying for a favorable political settlement has been open to Hanoi and the NFL since the spring of 1965, but they have obviously rejected it. They have done so first of all, because of a deep

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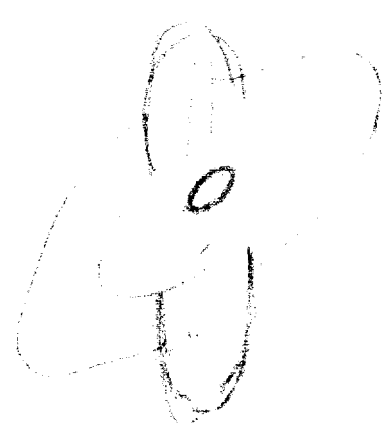
suspicion of the entire concept of achieving their ends through political bargaining -- a suspicion well grounded in what Hanoi must regard as the sell-out of their interests in 1954. Moreover, even if a political settlement seemed favorable, the Vietnamese Communists, with strong Chinese support, would prefer to win a military victory, which in their view would have international as well a regional significance. In their scheme, negotiations would be a mere formal endorsement of victory.

32. Hanoi evidently recognizes that negotiations on such a basis are not in sight, though they obviously hope that their persistence in a protracted war can still make such an outcome possible. The only other circumstances in which Hanoi seems likely to negotiate would be those in which it came to recognize that total defeat was certain. In that case, Hanoi might negotiate in the hope of achieving a political arrangement which would preserve some of its assets for a new try at a later date. There is no way of forecasting when Hanoi would conclude that it had to negotiate on this basis. However, there is no indication at present that such a turning in Hanoi's attitude is imminent.

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33. Hanoi's Allies. In addition to Hanoi's evaluation of the general situation, another factor bearing on the issue of negotiations is the influence of its allies. The argument is often made that Moscow will eventually persuade Hanoi to settle the war, ~~the Soviet incentive being~~ ^{in order} to remove Vietnam from the international agenda so as to get on with the business of liquidating the cold war. Perhaps at some future date, if and when Hanoi has become more pessimistic about its prospects in the South, Moscow's role could prove decisive.

34. The USSR. The Soviet attitude toward the war, however, appears to be mixed. The Soviets can see certain advantages for the USSR, in the problems which the war generates for US policy especially in Europe. On the other hand, they must be aware that the situation carries risks of direct confrontation with the US, which they wish to avoid. For the Soviets, the optimum outcome would be one by which a political process perhaps including negotiation, gave Hanoi a good prospect of achieving its aims in South Vietnam and thus inflicting a major reverse on the US, but without direct benefit to Peking and its theories. Evidently the Soviets do not think that the moment has yet come in which they can set in motion a scenario which would end this way.

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35. China. Indeed, it is highly questionable whether the USSR could exert such influence on Hanoi in the face of Peking's rigid opposition. China's adamant stand against any negotiations has been one constant factor in the war, and it seems likely that Peking will continue to reject a political settlement and urge a continuation of the fighting. But we cannot ignore the momentuous developments in Peking and the possibility that in the next year or two great changes may occur in the leadership. It does not seem likely that a future Chinese regime, following after Mao, will see its interests in Vietnam and Southeast Asia in a radically different way. But it is possible that the demise Mao will bring important reappraisals, which almost certainly will have to include the Vietnamese question.

Conclusion

36. Taking all of the above considerations into account, we conclude that the Communists are capable of fighting on for at least another year and are probably determined to do so. Moreover, they have a strong political incentive to keep the war going, especially until they have some clearer notion about the US Presidential elections and its possible impact on US policy.

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And Communist policy is almost certainly based on the calculation that during this period the US/allied position will be weakened and the Communist position strengthened. In our view, however, the Communists face important problems, and we believe that the Communist position, both militarily and politically in South Vietnam, will deteriorate over the next year.

37. If it does, at that point Hanoi may want to reconsider its options. It could move toward negotiations, as outlined above, or, equally likely, it could decide to allow the fighting to fade away. Hanoi's choice would depend of course on re-evaluation of all the factors discussed above, as well as new unforeseen elements. It is possible that North Vietnamese policy will take such a turn sooner, i.e., within the next year to 18 months. But this seems unlikely, in light of the military-political situation as a whole as Hanoi probably views it.

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ESTIMATE OF COMMUNIST MANPOWER IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. A major criterion for measuring the course of the war is an assessment of Communist manpower losses and how they relate to Hanoi's judgment of its ability to withstand these losses. A statistical analysis of the manpower resources of the Vietnamese Communists is inhibited, however, by the many uncertainties associated with the available data base.

2. There are three vital measures of the manpower situation: MACV estimates of enemy losses, the level of infiltration, and the Communist order of battle. Each of these contain serious deficiencies which, depending upon their final resolution, could substantially affect estimates of the course of the war. The number of battlefield casualties -- KIA -- is probably the most important, but least reliable. Also, the conservative criteria used by MACV in estimating both order of battle and infiltration allow for wide ranges and margins of error. Two of the most significant examples of these data problems are (a) the probability that the size of the irregular forces is at least 250,000 (compared to MACV's estimate of 100,000-120,000) and (b) the 50 percent

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spread between MACV's estimates of confirmed and possible infiltration. These large areas of uncertainty about key manpower measures have a strong influence on our estimates of actual main force losses and strength, particularly for the NVA. They also influence our judgments on the manpower reserves available to the Communists and their ability to sustain a given force level.

3. Even with these limitations, we believe that the main trends are sufficiently apparent that a meaningful though imprecise measure of Communist manpower capabilities is still possible. A comparison of the key statistics shows that total manpower losses in 1966 are 50 percent higher than in 1965 and that infiltration from North Vietnam in 1966 is from 2-3 times the level of infiltration in 1965.

I. THE MANPOWER DRAIN IN NORTH VIETNAM

4. A reconsideration of manpower in North Vietnam reinforces previous estimates that the problem is qualitative rather than quantitative. In some respects the strain caused by the manpower drain may have lessened late in 1966. The full commitment of

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labor to repairing and building lines of communication may have declined by from 15-30 percent from the end of 1965 levels.

5. Construction workers permanently assigned to repair and maintenance of LOC's in North Vietnam were estimated at 70,000-100,000 at the end of 1965 and 20,000-25,000 in Laos. We now estimate that with increased productivity resulting from the expertise acquired since the start of the bombings, plus the completion of alternate networks and bridge crossings, that the full-time force in North Vietnam could now be as low as 60,000 - 70,000.

6. The fact that a large share of imports flowing into North Vietnam are for the development of improvement of industrial facilities suggests that there are adequate reserves of skilled manpower and other essential inputs to develop new industrial plants or to convert existing plants to a war-supporting role. Recently announced data on the school population and higher education programs also indicate that manpower requirements have not handicapped the regime's educational policies.

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7. With almost two years experience in coping with the effects of the Rolling Thunder program and with the build-up of its military forces probably leveling off, the quantitative drain on North Vietnam's manpower has probably reached its peak. The major drawings on manpower resources during the coming year will be those caused by the casualties of the air and ground wars. The total of these casualties, based on 1966 experience, will probably not exceed 75,000-80,000 persons in 1967. This will mean, however, the continuing commitment of over 50 percent of the annual increment of the North Vietnamese physically fit males reaching draft age. Although this is substantially less than the military conscription of at least 80 percent of this group during 1965 and 1966, it is still an onerous qualitative burden for a nation to bear.

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II. The Manpower Drain in South Vietnam

A. The Build-up of Communist Forces

8. During the second half of 1966 the South Vietnamese War continued to become increasingly expensive for all participants. Allied deployments increased according to plan, and the Communist forces (primarily, VCMF/NVA) apparently attempted, and may in fact have achieved parity with the Allied build-up. Communist casualties increased slightly during the latter part of 1966, whereas Allied casualties were down slightly from those losses suffered during the first six months of this year. Furthermore, in a relative sense, enemy troops are currently being captured and defecting at rates essentially no higher than those observed in 1965.

B. Communist Forces

9. Current estimates of the number of Communist forces stationed in South Vietnam vary considerably depending on the methodology used to derive a confirmed enemy order of battle. USMACV estimates contain an inherent 3-month lag. Consequently, the conservative USMACV estimate of confirmed enemy strength in South Vietnam is considered to be the minimum number of Communist troops in South Vietnam. (See Table 1.)

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Table 1

Enemy Troop Deployment South Vietnam
1964-1966

	(in thousands)*		
	1964	1965	1966
NVA	2.5	26.1	44.9
VC MAIN FORCE	44.8	56.9	61.6
Irregulars	91.8-200.0**	110.0-300.0	110.0-399.0
Total	139.1-247.3	193.0-383.0	216.5-406.5

* End of year totals with the exception of 10 Dec 1966. All figures from USMACV except when noted.

** Independent CIA/ estimate.

C. Comparative VC/NVA and Allied Maneuver Battalion Strength by Corps Area

10. Analysis of current MACV estimates would indicate that in a relative sense the Allies have put more men into each Corps Area than the enemy in the last 6 months. The estimated build-up of confirmed VC/NVA units would seem, on first appraisal, to indicate that the Communists are finding it increasingly difficult to expand their main forces.

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11. Thus through early December the VC/NVA main forces had expanded by only 23,500 troops for a total of 106,500 including 45,000 NVA troops. We have previously estimated that the VC/NVA main force by the end of 1966 would be 125,000 including 60,000 NVA.

12. When the final returns are in on both MACV's confirmed order of battle and the level of confirmed infiltration, it is apparent that the enemy's main force strength will be considerably higher than the current estimate. If this be the case, the enemy, despite increasing manpower losses, has succeeded, with the possible exception of IV Corps, in maintaining its relative strength compared to that of the Allied forces.

D. Manpower Losses

13. The comparison of estimated enemy losses shown in Table 2, indicates an increase of over 50 percent in 1966 compared to 1965. The increasing rates of attrition of Communist forces, caused primarily by the increased level of combat, have forced the North Vietnamese to shoulder an increasing share of the manpower burden. We estimate that in 1965 the North Vietnamese troops sustained only 10 percent of the total losses. In 1966 the North

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Vietnamese should account for about one-fourth of total losses.

This share may climb as high as 40 percent in 1967.

Table 2

South Vietnam: Estimate of Enemy Losses

	<u>1965</u>	<u>1966</u>
KIA	35,400	56,000
Captured	6,300	9,800
"Chien Hoi" Military Returnees	9,500	12,000
TOTAL	<u>50,800</u>	77,800
Seriously wounded	19000-30,000	30,000-47,000
Deserters	9,500	12,000
GRAND TOTALS	79,300-90,300	119,800-136,000

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III. COMMUNIST MANPOWER REQUIREMENTS

A. Viet Cong

14. On the basis of data on the build-up of VC military forces since 1961, we estimate that the total military manpower requirement was on the order of 355,000-370,000 men or an average monthly requirement during the period of about 6,000 persons.

15. This estimate is based on current MACV order of battle holdings. A reappraisal of the strength of Communist irregular forces which is currently underway indicates that MACV estimates of the strength of irregular forces may have understated their growth drastically, probably by as much as 200,000 persons. If this be the case, the build-up of Communist forces during the 1961-1965 period would have required recruitment at a monthly rate of 9,000-9,500 persons. These requirements are within the currently estimated Viet Cong capability to recruit and train from 7,000 to 10,000 personnel a month. Additional thousands were recruited during the period to form the VC political/military cadre and combat support units which include from 60,000 to 90,000 persons.

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ANNEX

burden
16. The recruitment/for the Viet Cong has varied sharply during the period, ranging from at least 40,000 a year during 1961-1964 to over 120,000 a year in 1965, the year of their greatest force increase and the year during which estimated manpower losses more than doubled. The year 1965 also marked a leveling off in the estimated build-up of VC regular forces. Although the 1966 buildup is estimated at about 5,000 the increasing casualties being sustained by the VC will keep the manpower requirement at about 1965 levels. We estimate that Viet Cong forces will suffer total manpower losses of over 90,000-100,000 personnel during 1966. This yields a total replacement requirement of from 95,000-105,000 personnel to be replaced.

17. To meet a similar requirement in 1965 the VC had to resort to forced conscription and returnee programs but attained a capability to recruit and train some 7,000 to 10,000 personnel a month. Recruitment at this rate is probably close to the maximum capabilities of the VC. Several constraints combine to place this ceiling on VC recruitment capability. Among them are the increasing manpower losses being sustained by Viet Cong forces,

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ANNEX

the deterioration of VC political control resulting from allied military operations, and an apparent VC requirement to meet at least part of the NVA troop losses in South Vietnam.

18. All of the VC manpower losses do not represent a true military manpower requirement since a large number of the estimated losses are probably civilians -- either innocent victims of military action or labor engaged in logistic support activities and recruited for short-term periods. Some of the manpower losses are undoubtedly compensated ^{for} by upgrading personnel assigned to irregular units and transferring them to main and local force units.

19. The most important manpower requirement was to replace the casualties to be sustained during 1966 by VC main and local force units. We estimate that these ran from 35,000-40,000 in 1966. If these regular forces were also expanded by 5,000 troops during 1966, the manpower requirement for main and local forces alone has been between 3,000-4,000 troops a month.

20. Replacement at this level is not an onerous quantitative drain on VC manpower resources. Some 30,000 youth annually reach recruitment age in VC-controlled areas. The burden is even smaller

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ANNEX

if the irregular forces total as much as 300,000 persons. The upgrading of irregular forces at the rate of 3,000-4,000 troops a month would probably mean, however, that the VC regular forces will be hard pressed to maintain a high degree of skilled military cadre.

21. In one of the few captured documents giving meaningful aggregative data on annual recruitment in a VC province, total recruitment in 1965 amounted to 1.5 percent of the total population controlled by the VC. Recruitment specifically for military purposes (including militia and self-defense forces) was just over one percent of the population. Recruitment at this level is undoubtedly far short of the rates needed to meet recruitment targets.* But even recruitment at these low rates would provide nationally from 35,000-50,000 personnel annually, an amount more than sufficient to maintain the force strength of VC main and local force units.

* Some of the recruitment goals are guerrillas: 5 percent of the population in lowland areas, 2 percent in cities and towns and 10 percent in highland areas.

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ANNEX

B. NVA

22. In addition to the Viet Cong manpower requirements the NVA forces have been compelled to replace manpower losses ranging from 30,000-35,000 at the same time they were expanding their force levels from an estimated 26,000 at the end of 1965 to an estimated 60,000 at the end of 1966. To meet this requirement the NVA has drastically increased its infiltration of personnel in 1966. Estimated infiltration in 1966 will almost certainly exceed 65,000 persons and could be as high as 95,000.* Infiltration at this rate is adequate to meet the estimated NVA manpower requirements although some small share of this requirement may have to be provided by the Viet Cong if confirmed infiltration does not exceed 65,000 persons.

* These figures are projections based on the current MACV estimate of NVA infiltration in the two categories "accepted" and "possible" through September 1966.

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